



# Application Guidelines

## Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program

### About the Program

The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, also known as RTCA or Rivers & Trails, works with community groups and local and State governments to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. RTCA works in urban, rural, and suburban communities with the goal of helping applicants achieve on-the-ground conservation successes for their projects. Our focus is on helping communities help themselves by providing expertise and experience from around the nation. From urban promenades to trails along abandoned railroad rights-of-way to wildlife corridors, our assistance in greenway efforts is wide ranging. Similarly, our assistance in river conservation spans downtown riverfronts to regional water trails to stream restoration.

RTCA staff assistance includes help in building partnerships to achieve community-set goals, assessing resources, developing concept plans, engaging public participation, and identifying potential sources of funding. On occasion RTCA provides its assistance in collaboration with regional and national nonprofit organizations to further local conservation initiatives. Although RTCA does not provide financial assistance to support project implementation, we do offer technical assistance to community partners to help them achieve their goals. Project partners may be non-profit organizations, community groups, tribes or tribal governments, and local or State government agencies. Assistance is for one year and may be renewed for a second year if warranted.

For further information about RTCA and the work we are doing around the country and in your State, including case studies and regional contact information, please visit our web site at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca>.



### How to Apply for Assistance

We recommend that you contact our regional program staff to discuss your interest and seek guidance before applying. Applications for RTCA assistance are competitively evaluated by our regional offices, based on how well the applications meet the following criteria:

- 1) A clear anticipated outcome leading to on-the-ground success;
- 2) Commitment, cooperation, and cost-sharing by interested public agencies and non-profit organizations;
- 3) Opportunity for significant public involvement;
- 4) Protection of significant natural and/or cultural resources and enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities; and
- 5) Consistency with the National Park Service mission and RTCA goals (see box).

Application letters (one to three pages) should include the following information:

#### 1. Project Title and Description

- Provide the name of the project and project location.
- Note who is taking responsibility for the implementation of the project.
- Describe briefly what will be done, why the project is important, the proposed schedule, and who will be involved.
- Identify what populations in your community will be served by the project.
- Outline the background or prior activity on the project (if any), and the current status.

#### 2. Resource Importance

- Describe the most important natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources within the project area.

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## 3. Anticipated Results

- On-the-ground results: What specific resource will be created, conserved, enhanced or made available to the public? For Instance: How many river miles will be improved by restoration projects? How many river miles will be conserved with enhanced protection status? How many miles of multi-use trail will be created? How many acres of parkland will be created and where? How many acres of wildlife habitat will be restored?
- Other accomplishments: For example: an increased community commitment to stewardship, a new conservation organization, or the development of a concept plan for a trail.

## 4. Support for the Project

- Describe the support you anticipate from interested stakeholders, such as public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and landowners.
- List the project partners and describe their role(s) and contributions.

## 5. Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program Role

- Describe what kind of technical assistance or role you are seeking from the RTCA program.

## 6. Contact Information

- Please provide information about the key project supporter(s), including name of leader, organization, address, phone, fax, and e-mail.

Support letters from elected officials, community leaders, and cooperating organizations are strongly recommended.

The national deadline for projects set to start the following fiscal year (which runs from October 1 to September 30) is **July 1**. Regional offices may request additional information and may extend the deadline or accept applications at other times during the year. Please return your completed application letter to your regional RTCA Program Leader. Contact information for all of our regional offices is available through the Internet at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca>.

Alternately, you may submit your application to: Chief, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, MS 3622, Washington, D.C. 20240, or by e-mail to [Sam\\_Stokes@nps.gov](mailto:Sam_Stokes@nps.gov). You may also call us at 202-565-1200. If submitted to Washington, your application will be forwarded to the appropriate regional office for review.

Final project selection is generally completed in early November after passage of the federal budget. In the interim our staff will acknowledge receipt of your application. Unfortunately, limited staffing does not allow us to undertake all of the excellent projects that are proposed.

## Mission of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) implements the Service's mission in communities across America. RTCA's vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a network of protected rivers, trails, and greenways that promote quality of life and link Americans to their natural and cultural heritage in parks and beyond.

### Goals:

#### Increase Protection for Rivers and Open Space and Help Establish More Trails and Greenways

- Assist communities in establishing trail networks.
- Work to protect rivers and streams--their ecosystems and watersheds.
- Encourage statewide and regional conservation strategies.
- Promote Federal interagency coordination that benefits conservation.

#### Strengthen Community Conservation Advocacy, Partnerships, and Stewardship

- Help establish sustainable conservation organizations.
- Assist the communities of which National Parks are a part.
- Support conservation partnerships in obtaining funding and other resources.

#### Enhance Conservation and Recreation Opportunities for All Americans

- Engage in projects which reflect the nation's cultural diversity.
- Undertake partnership projects in urban and underserved areas.
- Establish a strong presence in every State.
- Build a staff that represents America's cultural diversity



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

## Contact Information:

### Address:

Sam Stokes, Program Leader  
Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington DC 20240

### Phone

(202) 565-1200

### Website

[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)

*The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.*

*The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world. Mission of the National Park Service, 1997*

## Other National Park Service Assistance Programs

Besides providing technical assistance through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program, the National Park Service gives targeted help in a number of related areas through the following programs:

- Hydropower Recreation Assistance** - provides technical assistance on recreation access and facilities, instream flows for recreation, and riparian corridor protection to all participants in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydropower licensing and relicensing proceedings. For more information, visit [www.ncrc.nps.gov/hydro](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/hydro).
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** - Provides 50% matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. For more information, visit [www.ncrc.nps.gov/lwcf](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/lwcf).
- Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR)** - Provides matching Federal grants to local governments for recreation planning and rehabilitation of recreation areas in cities and for innovative delivery of recreation services. For more information, visit [www.ncrc.nps.gov/uparr](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/uparr).
- Federal Lands to Parks** - Helps State and local agencies acquire, at no cost, surplus Federal land and facilities for parks and recreation. For more information, visit [www.ncrc.nps.gov/flp](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/flp).
- National Heritage Areas** - provides assistance to National Heritage Areas designated by Congress. For more information, visit [www.ncrc.nps.gov/heritage](http://www.ncrc.nps.gov/heritage).
- Rivers and Trails Studies** - undertaken by the National Park Service when specifically authorized by Congress. Rivers are studied for potential addition to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system. Trails are studied for potential addition to the National Trails system. For more information, visit <http://planning.den.nps.gov/>.
- Historic Preservation** - there are a variety of National Park Service programs offering assistance for a range of resources including archeological sites, battlefields, and historic landscapes. Some of these programs offer direct assistance to the public, others work through State Historic Preservation Offices. For more information, visit [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov).